Your Advance Care Planning Resource Kit

We plan for college, marriage, a baby & retirement... but we don’t prepare for the end of life.

Let’s change that!

It’s as simple as 1, 2, 3

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Advance care planning is a **process** where you reflect upon and plan for the healthcare you would want if you are unable to make decisions or speak for yourself. You should talk about your goals and wishes with loved ones and put them in writing.

Advance care planning isn't just for those who are sick or dying. It is important that you plan for your care early so that your wishes can be honored if you are in an accident, undergo surgery, or get a serious illness. Don't wait! Making your wishes known helps your loved ones and healthcare providers know and honor your goals and wishes if you are unable to speak for yourself.

Our guide gives you 3 steps to advance care planning. Keep in mind that this is a **process** and should be revisited as your goals, wishes, and health status change throughout your life.

In this kit:

- Got Plans? It’s as simple as 1, 2, 3
- Roles and Responsibilities of a Health Care Agent
- Next Steps – what to do with your advance directives
- Information about the MOST form

*Advance Care Planning documents provided separately.*
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Advance Care Planning
It’s as simple as 1, 2, 3!

1. **Decide** what kind of healthcare you would want and who you would want to speak for you if you cannot.
   - Ask yourself questions like: What makes life worth living? What would I consider a good (or bad) death? Who would I trust to speak for me?

2. **Discuss** your wishes with your loved ones and healthcare providers.
   - After reflecting on some of your wishes, spark some conversation with the important people in your life. Make sure to include the person who you would like to speak for you if you cannot. Ask him or her if they would be willing and able to do this for you. You want to pick someone that you will trust to honor your wishes. This person does not have to be your next of kin.
   - Be sure to discuss your wishes with your healthcare provider. If you have a serious illness or are planning to undergo surgery, he or she can help put your wishes into context. Once you document your wishes, make sure your healthcare provider has a copy of your most current documents on file!

3. **Document** your wishes in the form of advance directives.
   - Advance directives are legal documents that record your wishes in writing and help ensure your wishes are known & honored.
     - Health Care Power of Attorney: a document that allows you to name your Health Care Agent, the individual you would like to speak for you if you are unable to speak for yourself.
   - Remember, advance care planning is an ongoing process. Your wishes may change and that’s okay! Re-visit your documents on a regular basis and make any changes necessary to ensure they are up-to-date with your wishes. Keep your loved ones and healthcare providers informed any time your wishes change so they can help honor your wishes!
Roles & Responsibilities of a Healthcare Agent

1. Your role is to make healthcare choices for me if and when I am not able to make those decisions for myself. My doctor will decide when I have lost the ability to make my own healthcare decisions.

2. I will give you a copy of my advance directive documents. I will list any special instructions on this document. I am counting on you to follow those instructions and respect my wishes. I know this may not be easy since my choices may be different from the choices you might make for yourself or what you think is best for me.

3. As my healthcare agent, you will be able to make many healthcare decisions for me. This includes the ability to:
   - talk with my doctors about my medical condition and treatment options;
   - look at my medical information;
   - make decisions about who provides my medical care;
   - admit or discharge me from a healthcare facility. This includes a hospital, mental health facility, assisted living facility, or nursing home;
   - begin or stop life-prolonging measures;
   - consent to or refuse any tests, procedures or surgeries;
   - give permission for an autopsy; and
   - direct what will happen to my body after death.

   If I do not want you to have the authority for any of these duties, I have stated so in my advance directive documents.

4. I ask that you make treatment choices for me based upon my goals and desires about what kind of care I should receive. It is very important that we take time to talk about these issues so you will understand my goals and preferences.

5. If I need medical care and cannot make my own treatment decisions, please discuss my medical condition and treatment options with my healthcare providers. Please ask them for any medical information you need, and ask them to explain anything you don’t understand. The information they provide will help you make informed decisions about my treatment.

6. If, at any time, you decide that you can no longer serve as my healthcare agent, please let me know. Likewise, if I decide at some future time to name another person as my healthcare agent, I will let you know. Either decision will release you from any further responsibilities as my healthcare agent.

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Next Steps

What do I do after I have completed my advance directive 
(Health Care Power of Attorney and/or Living Will) documents?

Once you have completed these documents, there are a few steps to take to be sure your choices are honored by your doctors and loved ones.

1. **Give a copy to your doctor.** It is very important that your advance directives are added to your medical record. If you send your directives by mail, be sure to include your address, social security number, date of birth and contact information.

2. **Discuss your choices with your doctor(s).** Talk with your doctor about your wishes. Make sure you are both clear about what you want and agree that your wishes will be honored.

3. **Give a copy of your document(s) to your healthcare agent, if you have one.** This is the person you named in your Health Care Power of Attorney.

4. **Give copies to your family and loved ones.** You might also want to give a copy to your clergy.

5. **Keep the original document(s) where they are safe and easy to obtain.** Make an extra copy for yourself, in case you lose your original or it is accidentally destroyed or damaged. Do not put these documents in a safe deposit box.

6. **Label one copy “Hospital” and take it with you if you are admitted to a hospital.** Ask the hospital staff to make a copy of the document and return your copy to you.

7. **Make a list of everyone whom you gave a copy of your document(s).** If you ever change documents, you will have a list of who needs updated copies.

8. **Upload the documents onto your smartphone.** Consider uploading a copy of your advance directives onto your smartphone. The American Bar Association’s “My Health Care Wishes” smartphone app gives you immediate access to your advance directives wherever and whenever you need them.

![got plans?](gotplans123.org)
Important information about MOST forms:

- This bright pink form will help your doctor know and honor your healthcare wishes
- MOST should:
  - make it easier to talk to your doctor about difficult decisions;
  - travel with you from location to location (home, hospital, facility, etc.)
- MOST is designed for people with serious, chronic illness, not for young, healthy adults.
- **MOST is a doctor’s order.** You must get a copy from your doctor and discuss your wishes together. MOST is NOT a Living Will or Health Care Power of Attorney.
- If you have the form with you, any healthcare provider can follow those orders and honor your wishes.
- **If you are at home, the form should be visible and easy to access (above your bed or on your refrigerator door).**

**Section A: CPR**

- Section A tells the doctor if you do or do not want CPR. You can choose “Attempt” or “Do Not Attempt”
- CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation) can be used if your heart stops beating and you are not breathing.
- CPR can be helpful or harmful depending upon your condition. Talk to your doctor about what it might mean for you and what results you may expect based upon your health.
- You should understand that after receiving CPR you might be taken to the ICU (Intensive Care Unit) and put on a breathing machine.
**Section B: Medical Interventions**

- Section B gives you the chance to say what level of treatment you want based upon your goals of care.
- Comfort measures are provided at all levels of care.
- Check only one box based upon discussion with your doctor and family
  - **Full Scope of Treatment:** If your goal is to live as long as possible using any treatments available (breathing machine, feeding tube, etc.) no matter what your condition, check “Full Scope of Treatment.” If you make this choice, all treatments necessary to prolong life will be utilized.
  - **Limited Additional Interventions:** This box should be checked if you want to improve or maintain your level of function. Checking here means you don’t mind being taken to the hospital but do not want to end up in the ICU on a breathing machine. All comfort measures and other indicated medical treatments will be used.
  - **Comfort Measures:** Check this if you and your doctor have decided that further hospital stays and treatments will not benefit you. This means you would rather stay wherever you call home rather than be sent to the hospital. This helps you avoid unwanted medical treatment, ambulance trips, and hospital admissions.

**Section C: Antibiotics**

- Section C offers you three options similar to section B. You should select one option based upon your goals and discussions with your doctor and family.

**Section D: Medically Administered Fluids and Nutrition**

- Check only one box based upon discussions with your doctor and family
- Section D offers you three options as in Section B and C.
- Similar to CPR, a feeding tube can be helpful or harmful depending upon your condition. Talk to your doctor about what it might mean for you and what results you may expect based upon your health.
- Be sure you and your family understand when your body would benefit from artificial nutrition and hydration and when it would not.

**Section E: Discussion & Signatures**

- This section indicates to whom the doctor spoke about your choices. If you are unable to speak for yourself, your doctor will talk to your legal representative.
- If you and your doctor agree with your decisions, you will both sign the form to make it valid.
With support from our community partners:

**From Hospice & Palliative CareCenter:** Christine Brown  Ann Gauthreaux  Courtney Whicker  Mary Taylor Mann  Judy Swain

**From Novant Health:** Reba Teeter  Dee Leahman

**From Wake Forest Baptist Health:** F. Keith Stirewalt

* 2014. The Community Partnership for Compassionate Care.